



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Speedwell, 1923

WAGL-245

ex-Colonel John V. White

Any of various plants of the genus *Veronica*, having opposite leaves and clusters of small, usually blue flowers.

Builder: Fabricated Shipbuilding Corporation and Coddington Engineering Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Length: 172'

Beam: 32'

Draft: 11' 6"

Displacement: 1,130 tons

Cost: \$540,000; conversion cost was \$48,371

Commissioned: 1919 (U.S. Army); 1923 (USLHS)

Decommissioned: 19 June 1947

Disposition: Sold

Machinery: 2 Allis Chalmers compound, inverted, reciprocating steam engines; 2 Page & Burton watertube boilers; 1,000 SHP; twin propellers.

Performance & Endurance:

Max: 11.0 knots

Cruising: 10.0 knots; 1,800 mile range

Deck Gear: 20-ton capacity boom

Complement: 28

Armament: None; WWII ?

Electronics: None

Class History:

The *Speedwell* was the namesake of the *Speedwell*-class mine planters originally built for the U.S. Army in 1918 and 1919. Six were transferred to the U.S. Lighthouse Service at no cost in 1922. The original intent was for these vessels to serve a dual purpose: mine-planter in case of a war, and lighthouse tender during peacetime. Unfortunately, this conversion proved to be impracticable and too expensive and they were modified exclusively for service as tenders at a cost of between \$41,022 to \$110,963. Each had a turtleback forecastle installed and their anchors were mounted high to prevent the ship from being hung up on a buoy she was servicing. A steel main deck was added forward; new windows were installed in the pilothouse, and a new refrigerating plant was added. All vessels were then commissioned from 1923 to 1927 with new names.

Tender History:

The *Speedwell* was assigned to the 5th Lighthouse District and was based out of Baltimore, Maryland. She was transferred to Portsmouth, Virginia at the start of World War II.

She was decommissioned on 19 June 1947 and was sold.

Sources:

Cutter History File. USCG Historian's Office, USCG HQ, Washington, D.C.

Douglas Peterson. *United States Lighthouse Service Tenders, 1840-1939*. Annapolis: Eastwind Publishing, 2000.

Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.

